5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

the wealth derived from this trade enabled one of their chiefs, Kyungu, to maintain himself as paramount over all Ngonde. Among his people impersonal relationships thus had a greater importance. And it was, I believe, the historical isolation of the Nyakyusa from any considerable commercial contact with the outside world which prevented the rise among them of a paramount chief.

To-day the Nyakyusa are in process of integration with the civilized society of the world and the independence of their minute chiefdoms has inevitably passed away. The traditionally sovereign chiefs have been grouped in seven court districts with one chief as President of the Native Court in each; and these seven chiefs together with the two Presidents of the Ndali and Lambya Courts are federated, with an Appeal Court and joint Native Treasury of their own. In the seven Native Courts most of the traditionally sovereign chiefs are entitled to sit with their great-commoners, and assist the President and his great-commoners in the hearing of cases. The bulk of the legal business previously transacted by each chief in his own country is now taken to Court, but the power of great-commoners to settle disputes by arbitration in their separate villages is still the basis of the legal system.

A poll tax, now (1938) fixed at 9/- per annum for adult males with no additional tax for plural wives, has been introduced and chiefs are paid small salaries ranging from 5/-, 10/- or 20/- a month for ordinary chiefs to 80/- or 100/- a month for the Court Presidents.

The Nyakyusa, as we have previously mentioned, consist of a number of immigrant groups who have spread among and incorporated an indigenous population. The main immigrant groups were three in number and are distinguished to-day by the names of "Nyakyusa," "Kukwe" and "Selya." As all these three groups together (including those who are now incorporated in them) call themselves "Nyakyusa" to the outside world, I distinguish the one group to which the name more particularly belongs as the "Nyakyusa proper." The Nyakyusa proper live in the plain of Mwaungonde and up on the higher ground as far north as Tukuyu, the Kukwe live north of them around the base of Rungwe Mountain while the Selya live in the east of the district, between the Nyakyusa proper and the Kukwe, right under the wall of the Livingstone Mountains. Between the three groups there are minor differences of dialect and custom.

The extent to which the indigenous groups retain any separate identity varies in accordance with the number of the immigrants and the date at which they reached them, but over a large part of the district fusion has been complete.

We have already discussed the economic relations between the Nyakyusa and the Lupa gold fields which provides them with a market

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for labour and food. There are also a few small plantations owned by Europeans inside the district which fulfil a similar function. 26,000 acres only of land have been alienated in Rungwe District by the two Governments which have in turn controlled it; and it is the declared intention of the present Government to alienate no more. Of the alienated land only 2,200 acres is at the moment in use.

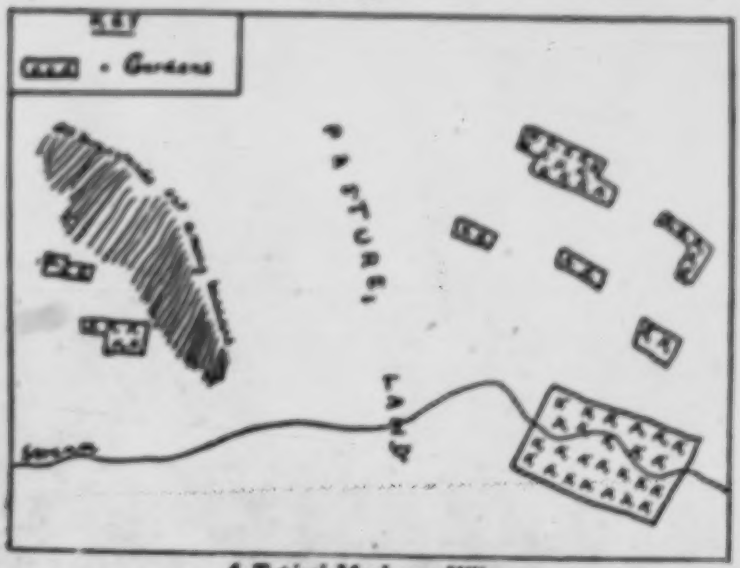
Missionaries of the Berlin Lutherans and the Moravian missions have been in the district since 1891, and a substantial proportion, about 16%, of the population now professes Christianity. The Christians live, some in separate Christian villages, some scattered about among their pagan neighbours. In the Christian villages the traditional age grouping usually prevails, with elders and deacons taking the place of great-commoners.

Such in outline is the form of society within which individual Nyakyusa hold property in land.

5. *INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD*

A village, as we have seen, usually consists of a group of houses built fairly close together with one or more blocks of garden land at some distance from them, while the village cattle graze the adjoining grass lands, in various different herds.

Plan A



A Typical Nyakyusa Village

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Nyakyusa

tion reveals the presence of some sons of other men's villages as well. 421
Brothers, half-brothers and other relatives are sometimes members of the 54
same village, but more often not; and if they do belong to the same village that is because they are near each other in age, and were born in the same village, not because they are kinsmen.

The members of the boys' village, which is now closed and no longer increases in numbers, continue to grow older, and after a time they begin to get married. Getting married, as we have seen, is often a gradual process; but it is not until he has his wife permanently with him that a young man can have fields of his own and eat their produce at his own place. The cultivation of land requires the co-operation of man and woman, cooking on any elaborate scale is a woman's business. [271]

As the members of a boys' village marry the village does not move but it expands. The houses are built ever bigger and further apart and the adjacent land is brought under cultivation. The boys' village with which I am best acquainted is in this transitional stage; it has fifty-three members altogether, the majority of whom are single, but some few are married, cultivate their own fields with their wives and eat food cooked by their wives in their own houses. Of those who are single some again are betrothed to girls who visit them from time to time, but each still cultivates his father's fields, and eats at his father's home.

(c) *The Men's Village*

It is now necessary to understand the system of men's villages and the general political organization in which the boys' villages finally take their place.

The number of age-villages in one chiefdom, all the members of 631
which are married, varies with different circumstances, but the most 428
usual number is from six to twelve. The age system is only broken by 561
moving or by death; when a man dies his heir usually comes and lives where the dead man was living in his age-village. There he inherits the wives, the huts, the cows and the land of his predecessor, he inherits the dead man's position in the village and often takes his personal name as well. The heir may be many years younger than his new neighbours but he is now treated as their contemporary, he sits with them at ceremonies, he shares their rights at any division of meat. The age system in the villages is also broken by moving, for a stranger may come and be granted land in a village even though he is considerably older or younger than the bulk of its members. But otherwise members of a village are roughly contemporaries.

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631 976 all, hunting is organized like warfare and fishing is a joint endeavour, both ordered by the chief.

471 622 Every chief has a title of ownership (*ebuzwe nshyi*) to the land of his chiefdom and can evict any man he pleases, (giving him another plot), if he wishes to build there himself; but his people also have titles of ownership to it, both collectively, under the leadership of the great commoners, and individually, each man to his own ground. It is the great commoners who, in consultation with their neighbours, give to the sons of each village land on which to build; it is they who, together, finally fix the boundaries of the young men's villages at their "Coming Out;" it is they who, again in consultation with their neighbours, grant land to strangers who ask for it, though they must notify the chief and get his approval before doing so.

627 692 As the single great commoners settle disputes within their own villages so the chief and great commoners together hear and decide cases within the chiefdom. Many of these legal actions are now settled in the Courts, but not all of them; and, even when cases are going to Court, preliminary hearings commonly take place before the chief, first. Cases are conducted and witnesses interrogated by chief and great commoners together, and the decision which the chief pronounces is an expression of their general opinion.

554 629 Among the great commoners there is an order of seniority. The leaders of the two senior age-villages of the chief's own men play a prominent part at his "Coming Out," they each have a pre-eminent authority in one side of his chiefdom, and the other great commoners rank as their juniors, some on one side, some on the other. In the old days the two senior great commoners each led a whole side of the chiefdom in war.

622 754 The two most effective checks on the power of a chief are migration and witchcraft. Military strength used to depend upon the number of a chief's adherents, to-day the scale of his salary is similarly dependent; men are quite free to move, and there is a constant flow of adherents from unpopular to popular chiefs. But unpopularity is most feared in its spiritual form of witchcraft. We have seen already that an adverse current of opinion is believed to act invisibly, as the "breath of men," against an unpopular member of a village and to make him sick. So also the adverse opinion of a single village or of a whole chiefdom is believed to have power against a chief, to bring sickness or even death upon him. As in the single village, so in the whole chiefdom the great commoners are the prime sources of this spiritual power; they are believed severally to protect the members of their own villages and jointly to protect their